



*Air Force Association Response to 7/16/09 Speech by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates at the Economic Club of Chicago*

1. Secretary Gates: *“With the support of the Air Force leadership, I concluded that 187 – the program of record since 2005, plus four more added in the FY 09 supplemental – was a sufficient number of F-22s and recommended as such to the president.”*

Facts: The program of record for 187 F-22s is a budget-driven number. 243 is the military requirement for a fleet size that affords “moderate risk.”

- a. According to General John Corley, Commander Air Combat Command, “In my opinion, a fleet of 187 F-22s puts execution of our current national military strategy at high risk in the near to mid-term. To my knowledge there are no studies that demonstrate 187 are adequate to support our national military strategy. Air Combat Command analysis, done in concert with Headquarters Air Force, shows a moderate risk can be obtained with an F-22 fleet of approximately 250 aircraft” (*June 9, 2009 letter to Senator Saxby Chambliss (R-GA)*)
  - b. During an April 30, 2009 Senate Armed Services Airland subcommittee hearing, Barry Watts, senior fellow with the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, testified that the figure of 183 F-22s was “purely budget driven.” He continued, “The Air Force was essentially told, ‘Given the cap on the program, the total acquisition program, you can produce as many as you can under that cap.’”
  - c. Pentagon Spokesman Geoff Morrell stated on 7/14/09 that a recent “study” highlighted by Pentagon leadership as the justification for terminating the F-22 fighter isn’t really a study at all, but a series of briefings by DOD’s Program Analysis and Evaluation shop and the Air Force. According to Morrell, the reports are “not so much a ‘study’” as “work products.” This declaration should not be viewed as an exercise in semantics. Canceling the F-22 before the military requirement is fulfilled entails tremendous strategic risk that should be informed by robust analysis, not ad hoc “work products” to justify budget cuts.
  - d. The Air Force requirement for F-22 was 381 for 8 years (2000 to 2008) and the threat environment has only increased over that time. Trying to make 187 (183+4) to appear as a “requirement,” when in fact it is not, raises serious questions about the integrity of the defense planning process.
2. Secretary Gates: *“President Obama’s budget proposal is, I believe, the nation’s first truly 21st century defense budget. It explicitly recognizes that over the last two decades the nature of conflict has fundamentally changed – and that much of*

*America's defense establishment has yet to fully adapt to the security realities of the post-Cold War era and this complex and dangerous new century."*

Facts: When it comes to defense planning, this much is constant: It is not possible to predict the future. That's why we should prepare for a wide range of threats.

- a. That, in fact, is the key lesson of Iraq and Afghanistan. The nation over the past few decades largely ignored investing in irregular warfare capabilities because leaders thought we would never engage in it after Vietnam. They were wrong and the country paid for this mistake with tremendous sacrifice
  - b. Failure to acquire the full "moderate-risk" military requirement of 243 F-22s repeats this mistake, just at the other end of the spectrum. We should not be trading ground-force casualties in unarmored humvees for ground-force casualties in air attacks, or for airmen shot down in obsolete, unsurvivable aircraft in future conflicts.
  - c. As history proves, the only thing more costly than a first-rate Air Force is a second-rate Air Force.
3. Secretary Gates: *"Most of the proposals – especially those that increase support for the troops, their families, and the war effort – have been widely embraced. However, some of the crucial reforms that deal with major weapons programs have met with a less than enthusiastic reaction in the Congress, among defense contractors, and within some quarters of the Pentagon itself."*

Facts: Taking care of the men and women who serve our nation in uniform along with their families demands that we provide them with the equipment required to fight, survive, and win.

- a. Air Dominance is the precondition for any successful US combat operation—whether facing a conventional or asymmetric foe.
- b. The global threat environment is rapidly evolving and proliferation of modern weaponry is negating the survivability of the Air Force's legacy fleet.
  - i. Over thirty nations operate fighter aircraft that equal or exceed the capabilities of the F-15 and F-16, whose designs respectively date back to the 1960s and 1970s. Nations such as Russia and China are also developing 5th generation fighters that will have F-22-like capabilities and will be bought in F-35-like quantities ... and sold to other countries.
- c. The F-22 is the only fighter aircraft currently in the Air Force inventory that is survivable in this increasingly dangerous world.
- d. While the F-35 promises to be a capable aircraft, its entire design was based on the premise that an adequate number of F-22s would secure the sky. In fact, the F-35's anticipated affordability has been enabled through the protection the F-22 and its advanced capabilities are supposed to provide for the F-35 in defended airspace.

4. Secretary Gates: *“the F-22 is clearly a capability we do need – a niche, silver-bullet solution for one or two potential scenarios – specifically the defeat of a highly advanced enemy fighter fleet. The F-22, to be blunt, does not make much sense anywhere else in the spectrum of conflict.”*

Facts: Air Dominance is can never be taken for granted nor should it ever be considered a “silver bullet” or “niche” capability. In fact, history clearly illustrates that small countries can make life very challenging in the sky.

- a. During the Korean War US Air Force struggled to deploy sufficient numbers of fighters to secure air dominance. Cold War air defense requirements in the United States and Europe stretched the force thin and at one point during the summer of 1951, the Air Force was only able to field 89 F-86s in Korea against nearly 400 MiG 15s. Air dominance was far from guaranteed during this period and operations often ground to a halt because of the risk posed by enemy aircraft.
  - b. In Vietnam, we lost 2,448 aircraft to a third world military whose Air Force deployed fewer than 200 aircraft. Over half the F-105s ever built were shot down in combat and the type was withdrawn from service in 1971 because too few existed in the inventory to support a sustainable rotation base. In fact during the final days of the Vietnam War during Operation Linebacker II, we lost 15 B-52 in 12 days because we were unable to secure air dominance.
  - c. In 1973, during the Yom Kippur War, Israel lacked air dominance and lost 109 aircraft, over a third of its prewar air strength, in just 19 days of combat. On the ground, its foes, facing weakened Israeli air attacks and emboldened by the success of their surface-to-air missiles and antiaircraft fire, extracted a heavy toll of Israeli forces, destroying over 400 tanks.
  - d. Off the Falklands in 1982, Britain's Royal Navy lacked sufficient air power to prevent Argentine airmen from successfully attacking British ships, even though Argentina possessed largely outdated "hand-me-down" equipment. Britain lost so many ships that on-scene commanders and government ministers alike feared their fleet might have to be withdrawn. The resolute courage and training of British servicemen, combined with Argentine mistakes, enabled Britain to prevail. But that victory came at an excessive price. Subsequently, the Royal Navy has acknowledged "Air supremacy is a necessary precondition of command of the sea."
5. Secretary Gates: *“It simply will not do to base our strategy solely on continuing to design and buy – as we have for the last 60 years – only the most technologically advanced versions of weapons to keep up with or stay ahead of another superpower adversary – especially one that imploded nearly a generation ago.”*

Facts: The United States should never take technological superiority for granted or fail to recognize its unparalleled importance. Without this advantage, we largely have to revert back to winning wars by attrition.

- a. During the Second World War, US aircraft were largely at parity with those fielded by enemy forces. We lost 10,000 aircraft and 30,000 airmen over the skies of Europe, and many troops on the ground died under enemy air attack during this brutal war of attrition.
  - b. During the Vietnam War, US aircraft flew a total of 873 sorties against the Thanh Hoa Bridge, a target that spanned the Song Me River. The strikes began in 1965 and the bridge survived seven year's worth of repeat attacks, during which 104 pilots were shot down in the process. The structure was finally destroyed on April 27, 1972 when Air Force aircraft used then-new precision guided munitions to eliminate the structure on a single mission. Afterwards, 7th AF HQ stated that "to have inflicted comparable damage, no less than 2,400 unguided bombs would have been required."
  - c. The advantage afforded by technology was also illustrated on the first night of Desert Storm when 20 new F-117 stealth fighters took the unprecedented step of attacking 28 separate targets. On the same night it took a combined force of 41 legacy non-stealth aircraft to strike one target—4 F/A-18s to defend against enemy aircraft, 3 drones to serve as decoys, 5 EA-6B aircraft to jam enemy radar, along with 4 F-4s and 17 F/A-18s to suppress enemy surface-to-air missiles so that 4 A-6s and 4 Tornados could strike one target. The full spectrum cost imposed by these legacy aircraft was tremendous—aircraft development and acquisition funding, operations and maintenance expenses, personnel bills, base access issues, etc.
  - d. The cost associated with the F-22 is substantial. However, the opportunity cost of not having the capabilities afforded by the F-22 is overwhelming.
6. Secretary Gates: *"But other nations have learned from the experience of Saddam Hussein's military in the first and second Iraq wars – that it is ill-advised, if not suicidal, to fight a conventional war head-to-head against the United States: fighter-to-fighter, ship-to-ship, tank-to-tank."*

Facts: Deterrence is a critical national security capability. Preventing war is always better than engaging in combat. However, continual investment in essential national security assets like the F-22 is key for maintaining a credible deterrent force.

- a. After Vietnam, leaders in the United States realized the value of air dominance and invested substantial sums in aircraft such as the F-15 and F-16. To say these platforms have been successful is an understatement. They deterred the Soviet Union during the last decade of the Cold War and enabled successful US operations in Desert Storm, Bosnia, Kosovo, and the initial days of OEF and OIF. In fact, these aircraft have been so successful that many now take air dominance for granted. However, we must not become complacent—these fighters are nearing 30 years in age.
- b. Procuring the full military requirement of 243 F-22s is an essential step in ensuring that America's air dominance is not successfully challenged in the future. The global threat environment is becoming increasingly

dangerous and the unique capabilities fielded by the F-22 will be essential in enabling successful US combat operations for years to come.

- c. Credible deterrence demands that the United States have sufficient forces to engage in multiple conflicts. Otherwise, potential adversaries will be emboldened to act once American forces are committed to an engagement with insufficient reserve forces to deploy elsewhere. 187 F-22s is the force structure required for one engagement. A fleet of 243 aircraft is the number required to enable deterrence with moderate risk.
  - d. During a hearing before the Senate Armed Services Airland subcommittee on April 30, 2009, General Richard Hawley, former Commander of Air Force Air Combat Command, testified that analysis he took part in showed that "the number [of F-22s] required to conduct operations in two major regional contingencies against adversaries who are capable of contesting our control of the air is 381."
7. Secretary Gates: *"Let me start with the controversy over the F-22 fighter jet. We had to consider, when preparing for a future potential conventional state-on-state conflict, what is the right mix of the most advanced fighter aircraft and other weapons to deal with the known and projected threats to U.S. air supremacy? For example, we now have unmanned aerial vehicles that can simultaneously perform intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance missions as well as deliver precision-guided bombs and missiles. The president's budget request would buy 48 of the most advanced UAVs – aircraft that have a greater range than some of our manned fighters, in addition to the ability to loiter for hours over a target."*

Facts: Investment in UAVs is critically important. These aircraft afford valuable intelligence and many are able to strike targets.

- a. However, the UAVs currently being procured are not survivable in contested airspace.
- b. Aircraft like the F-22 will be required to gain air dominance to allow them to successfully engage.
- c. We should not assume that the air dominance we currently enjoy over Iraq and Afghanistan will be as easily attained and maintained in other regions around the world.
- d. Considering our poor track record at accurately predicting future threats, spending tomorrow's dollars on today's problems entails much risk.